

## CHRONICLE

# COST Action E27 "Protected Forest Areas in Europe – Analysis and Harmonisation (PROFOR) 7<sup>th</sup> Working Groups' and Management Committee Joint Meeting in Lithuania

*...It would be welcomed that anthropocentric view will be avoided, that is all in the nature, in the environment is made for man's sake as by Aristotle: "Nature made nothing in vain, and everything had a purpose. Plants were created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men. Domestic animals were to labour, wild ones to be hunted." This view and priority of man left for a long time since Aristotle through the Middle Ages and further. Anything had right (animals had no rights, plants had no rights either, and nature was for profit and pleasure of humankind, and use was unlimited)....*

COST Action E27 "Protected Forest Areas in Europe - Analysis and Harmonisation (PROFOR) 7<sup>th</sup> Working Groups' and Management Committee Joint Meeting was held in Palanga, largest resort on the Baltic coast in the Western Lithuania on 13-15th May 2004. Lithuanian Forest Research Institute hosted the meeting.

COST Action E27 PROFOR is one in links of the intergovernmental framework for European co-operation in the scientific and technical research COST. The main goal of the Action is the harmonisation of the wide-ranging categories of protected forest areas in Europe in the context of present international systems of protected areas. Protected forest areas are the keystone in most national and international conservation strategies and forest policy. For the attainment of the comprehensive common understanding of protected forest areas, it is important to establish a definite overview of national approaches to classification of protected areas taking into consideration requirements and circumstances of each nation. The member countries of the PROFOR are 23 European countries such as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, F.Y.R. of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The official Observer Organizations of the Action E27

PROFOR are a Pan-European Forest Initiative MCPFE Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, and EEA European Environment Agency that is European Topic Centre on Nature Protection and Biodiversity. Representatives from 21 member countries, Ms Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs (Observer Organization MCPFE, Liaison Unit Warsaw), Mr Günter Siegel (Scientific Officer for the COST Domain on Forests and Forestry Products and Acting Scientific Officer for the COST Domain on Social Sciences and Humanities), invited speaker Dr Nigel Dudley (United Kingdom, Equilibrium) as well as representatives of the Ministry of Environment of the Lithuania and local bodies of protected areas met together to elucidate the current status of the Action E27 and international initiatives of protected areas in Europe, the status and provisional results of the each working group and management committee, to talk and analyse over the compiled background information.



Opening of the COST Action E27 "Protected Forest Areas in Europe - Analysis and Harmonisation (PROFOR) 7<sup>th</sup> Working Groups' and Management Committee Joint Meeting. Current status of the Action: the Chairman of the Action E27 Dr Georg Frank (Austria)

The meeting programme encompassed the keynote presentations in two plenary sessions on the present state of Action and results of the working groups' sessions, general discussions as well as three parallel working group sessions chaired by their leaders Dr Jim Latham, Mr Kris Vandekerkhove and Mr Andreas Schuck. The management committee meeting has followed a set pattern. Ms Rūta Baškytė, Director of State Protected Areas Service (SPAS) under the Ministry of Environment, and the Chairman of the Action E27 Dr Georg Frank (Austria), have delivered the welcome addresses to attendance. Ms Rūta Baškytė surveyed the present state of protected areas and representatives of the Lithuanian Forest Research Institute, Ms Silvija Šaudytė and Prof Stasys Karazija have given information on the present state of protected forest areas (PFAs) in Lithuania. Speakers pointed out that the System of Protected Areas of Lithuania consists of areas of four different priorities as follows: 1) areas of conservation priority where unique or typical objects of a natural or cultural landscape are protected including strict reserves (natural and cultural), reserves and the objects of natural and cultural heritage; 2) areas of ecological reservation priority, which are distinguished avoiding the negative impact on protected complexes and objects of natural and cultural heritage or negative impact of anthropogenic objects on the environment. These are zones of ecological protection; 3) areas of reconstructive protection including reconstructive and genetic sites that are designed to restore, enrich and protect natural resources; and 4) complex protected areas where conservation, protective, recreational and economic areas are joined by the general programme of protection, regulation and use. The following are national and regional parks and biosphere monitoring areas (biosphere reserves and biosphere grounds). On the ground of the importance, the complex protected areas belong to extremely protected areas. Presently, the system of extremely protected categories comprises ca. 12 % of the total area of Lithuania. By way to protect the natural habitats of the fauna and the flora (92/43/EEC), the network of NATURA 2000 areas is establishing. These areas will be integrated into the present national system of protected areas. By 2004, the most important areas for bird protection will be validated and the final list of territories important for the habitat protection will be confirmed. It is suggested to establish 90 territories of the importance for bird protection after the EU Bird Directive; as well as 300 territories of importance for the habitat protection after the EU Habitat Directive. Having established NATURA 2000 areas, the size of protected areas of Lithuania should increase by 2 to 3 % that will reach 14 - 15% of the

total area of Lithuania. The main advantages of the protected areas of Lithuania are their diversity, representativeness (all biological and landscape variety is represented including both typical and unique systems), complexity (both natural animate and inanimate and cultural complexes are protected), sufficiency (the size of established areas is sufficient to warrant the protection of particular complexes), regularity as established areas are located regularly through the territory of a region or country, and interconnection as separate areas are connected by geo-ecological and bio-migratory links. The forest area comprises 50% of the total protected area of Lithuania, and forests occupy the largest area of the different categories of protected areas, for instance forests in national parks cover 63.2 % of the total territory. The total area of protected forest areas makes up 19 %.

Leaders of the working groups stated the actualities and provisional results of each group work. The plenary sessions were followed by the parallel sessions of the working groups. The members of Working Group 1 directed their attention at the main items of the agenda such as the status and further actions of country reports, synthesis work including items of the history of protected forest areas (PFAs), analysis of PFAs types, responsible organisations, main selection criteria of PFAs, inventories and monitoring, landscape and wider issues, naturalness and key terms that are related to protected forest areas and either widely used or are especially problematic, as well as economic aspects of PFAs. The attention of the Working Group 2 directed at the clarifying and harmonisation of the information on European Protected Forest Areas. The scientific analysis and elements for improvement of the international classification systems for Protected Forest Area developed by international bodies and endorsed by the different national governments were discussed. The main international organizations which collect the data on forests and forest indicators, including protected forest areas are FAO, UNECE/FAO, IUFRO with Task on a Global Forest Information System GFIS and International Tropical Timber Organization ITTO through periodic forest resources assessments FRA. Different environmental organizations as IUNC, WWF etc, also collect information on forest biodiversity. European Environmental Agency EEA and its Topic Centres, European Forest Institute EFI, Eurostat, Joint Research Centre of European Commission JCR, European Forestry Information and Communication System EFICS also collect information related to protected forests. UNECE/FAO Timber Committee "Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA) is the main information source for the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest MCPFE process. The main international

classification systems were described, compared and evaluated, using the results of TBFRA, the MCPFE's State of Europe's forests 2003. The input from all countries members of the COST Action E27 as well as the use of definitions of forests on the protected forest areas of Europe were analysed. The suggestions for further development of a clear set of protection categories for reporting on Protected Forest Areas including input on the IUNC-classification and MCPFE-classification have been analysed. The results on the EEA Common Database on Designated Areas CDDA, the general conclusions on the TBFRA and MCPFE Data Gathering and Reporting as well as the item on the clarification of the use of the TBFRA classification of "forest" and "other wooded land" with focus on protected forest areas were discussed.

The participants of the meeting were interested in the presentations of the invited speaker Dr Nigel Dudley (UK, Equilibrium) and Ms Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs, representative of the Observer Organization MCPFE Liaison Unit, Warsaw. Dr Nigel Dudley introduced to the IUNC-project "Speaking a common language", which deals with the items of interpretation of the protected forest areas and develops guidance for use of IUNC protected area categories in the protected forest areas. The project aims to establish the impact and effectiveness of the 1994 IUNC guidance, to examine what needs to be done to develop and promote the objectives-based system of protected area categories, to involve stakeholders in the work and notably through World Parks Congress, to provide technical advice on the Category System to a proposed programme of work on protected areas for IUNC. Ms Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs to bring information on MCPFE initiatives and continuity to the knowledge of the meeting attendance. The Work Programme of MCPFE is one of the Pan-European Actions for the implementation of Vienna resolution 4 *'Analysis of European networks of protected forest areas concerning the comprehensiveness, representativeness and adequacy of protected forests with regard to the conservation goal'*, and COST Action E27 is approached as one of the leading actions implementing this resolution. These Pan-European actions on resolution V4 aim to tackle the Pan-European priorities on the conservation and appropriate enhancement of forest biodiversity. The members of the Management Committee of COST Action E27 gathered to debrief the presentation of the Scientific Officer, to discuss the important items of the further activities including evaluations, requests for the new members, progress reports of working groups, long-term planning, possibilities of publications and participation of non-COST countries, have provided for the time and place of the next meetings.



COST Action E27 "Protected Forest Areas in Europe - Analysis and Harmonisation (PROFOR) 7<sup>th</sup> Working Groups' and Management Committee Joint Meeting. Scientific excursion for the Žemaitija National Park: walking-tour on the animal trail in the Plokštinė Strict Nature Reserve, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2004. Excursion lecturer Mr. Giedrius Norvaišas, Director of the Žemaitija National Park

The meeting embraced two scientific excursions for the Žemaitija National Park and Kuršių Nerija National Park that deal with the key discussion topics.

Žemaitija National Park situated in the North Western Lithuania, 56 km from the meeting venue, Baltic coast. The Excursion lecturers were Mr Giedrius Norvaišas Director of the ŽNP, and Chief forester Mr Stanislovas Vyšniauskas.

The National Park has been established in 1991 to preserve the areas of the Žemaitija Region most valuable from the natural and cultural point of view. The main goals are the conservation of the district and surrounding environment of the biggest Lake Plateliai, to carry out the scientific research and monitoring of the environment, ethnic and cultural heritage and cumulating of the information, to cherish the cultural traditions of region, spread knowledge and ideas of environment protection, promote recreation activities and primarily the education and ecological tourism. The total area is 21,720 hectares and forests comprise 44.6% of the total area. The main functional zones are as follows: the conservation zone including strict nature reserves and reserves that occupy 5% and 43% of the total area respectively; protection zone of 15%, recreation zone of 2% as well as the economical zone of 35% of the total area. Any economic activities are restricted that could be harmful to environment and are not related to the functions of the park as well as are inconsistent with the interests of local inhabitants. The hilly relief of the Park was moulded 12,000 years ago by a receding glacier. Most of the area is covered



with relatively high hills (150-190 m). The park is situated at the watershed of three rivers: the Minija, the Bartuva and the Venta. The most valuable site is the Plateliai group of lakes with the region's largest water body, Lake Plateliai. 12 species of mammals from 49 found in the Park as well as 58 species of plants are listed in the Lithuanian Red Data Book. The Park is famous for its rich and valuable cultural heritage. Local people have preserved their dialect, customs, character features, buildings and original small architecture. The main features of nature include the hydrographical systems of larger Lake Plateliai, Laumalenka and Šilinė, the wooded wetlands of Plokštinė and Rukundžiai strict nature reserves, the Šarnelė swamp, the valleys of the rivers Babrungas and Mergupis, the marshes of Paburgė, Siberija, Pakastuva, Užpelkiai and Ertenis, and the unique ecosystems of the forests of Paplatelė reserve, Šeirė and Pailgis and of the marshy grassland at Juodupis. The park has 12 monuments of nature, among which one of the most impressive is the *Ragana* (witch) ash-tree, Lithuania's thickest ash measuring 7.2 m in diameter and 32 m in height. National Park is obvious object as complex protected area including either Natural and Cultural heritage. The park boasts over 200 cultural heritage sites, more than 30 of which are archaeological monuments for instance traces of Stone Age settlements, mounds, altar hills and old burial grounds. The sites of great architectural value include the churches in Beržoras, Plateliai and Žemaičių Kalvarija, old farmsteads and the Babrungėnai mill. Žemaičių Kalvarija boasts a number of monuments of architecture, art, archaeology and history, of which the most important is the Stations of the Cross consisting of chapels built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Other objects under protection are crosses typical of this region, small chapels and wayside shrines with sculptures of saints, which even today are put up by roads or fixed to trees here. The recreation function of the park is well developed. The recreation zone includes camping sites in the forest at Lake Plateliai and other lakes. There are established several educational ecological walking trails. The Šeirė trail (4.1 km) is established to explore the landscape, flora and fauna characteristic of this region. The trail "*The Trip of Giliukas (acorn) and Kaštoniukas (chestnut) Around Plateliai Manor Park*" constituted 1 km and is designed for children from primary schools. The trail introduces the plants and gives tips of how people should behave in the forest. The walking and cycling *Plateliai-Beržoras* trail (1.5 km) presents the sites of natural and cultural heritage of the area. There is possibility to learn more about the ethnic traditions and history including the traditional songs and dances of the Žemaitija region and learning about nature-praying (pagan) festivals and rites.

The participants of the Meeting had a possibility to get to know of the unique Kuršių Nerija National Park and its activities. Kuršių Nerija National Park (KNNP) was established on April 23rd, 1991 by the Act of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania "to preserve the most valuable complex of Lithuanian seaside with its unique landscape and the dune ridge, natural and ethnocultural heritage, for sustainable use and its care". By the IUCN (The World Conservation Union) classification KNNP has been recognised as Category II. Kuršių Nerija National Park has been a member of EUROPARC federation since 1997. More early, in 1960 the Kuršių Nerija Landscape Reserve has been established, and since 1966 the restricted management regime was confirmed. In 1976 this area was designated as a State Forest Park. In 2000 KNNP was included into UNESCO World Heritage List as a valuable cultural landscape. The main objectives are to preserve natural heritage in the Curonian Spit; to preserve its cultural heritage and encourage traditional architecture; to control economic and urban development; to perform scientific research and monitoring; to organise environmental education; to develop cognitive recreation; to collect and store data about the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage; to promote natural and cultural values of the Curonian Spit.

The Park situated on the narrow peninsula that separates the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea. This peninsula is a sandy stretch of land covering an area of 18 thousand hectares and extending 97 kilometres with the width from 400 m (narrowest part in the northern part) to 3.8 kilometres in the widest part at the Bulvikis Horn. The highest dune is Vecekrugs (67.2 m). The evolution of the Curonian Spit is comparatively short but quite rich. The development of this peninsula had started to the North from the Semba Peninsula some 5 – 6 thousand years ago. Moving dunes covered the moraine ground and the swamp. Remains of this swamp appear as Sentlunka raised bog. Accumulated sand joined the continent and today the Curonian Spit is 1 to 2 kilometres closer to the continent than at the beginning. The parabolic dunes were formed in the spit at the end of the Littorina Sea stage. Parabolic dunes were overgrown by the forest and didn't move any more. Fragments of the old growth forest are preserved there. The entire surface was carved with hollows and ridges. Vegetation covering parabolic dunes prevailed. Up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century the spit covered by mixed forest with oaks, lindens, elms, pines, birches, alders and hazelnuts. They were from 30 to 40 m high and some reached 60 m above sea level. Forest cover has destroyed sometimes because of fires and that influenced the sand drifting. However, since 16<sup>th</sup> century the natural harmony has been destroyed

because of negative human impact that caused the severe sand shifting. The moving sands swallowed up 14 villages. It was in 1825 when G.D. Kuvertas started the first reforestation project suppressing the sand. Presently the spit is protected by app. 7 thousand hectares of forests. The sea winds shifted the sand, creating a range of large sand dunes stretching for app. 70 kilometres from north to east. Landscape elements of the Curonian Spit change from west to east. On the western coast the sandy beach meets the sea. The fore dune ridge borders the sand beach, which varies from 25 to 70 m wide. The fore dune ridge rises up to 15 m high and extends from 120 to 130 m wide. The largest of the dunes are up to 1000 meters high. Today forests cover the most part of the spit. Only in Nagliai and Grobstas Strict Nature Reserves and Parnidis Landscape Reserve trees do not cover dune areas. The specific sea sand plain (palve) lies behind the fore dune ridge. The Curonian word 'palvė' means "yellowish". This sand plain was formed of sand, which was blown from the sea. In some places the thickness of the sand layer reaches more than 6 or 7 metres. Regular settlements in the Curonian Spit appeared just in the beginning of Mesolithic Age about 4000 B.C.

Presently, the total area of KNNP is 26,474 hectares, including land (36.9%) Curonian Lagoon (15.9%) the Baltic Sea (47.2%). Forests (70.1%) and sands (25.4%) cover the land (9774 ha), and only small fall to roads (24%) urban areas (1.5%) swamps (0.3%) meadows and pastures (0.2%), yet less is the share of arable land (0.05%), some gardens (0.02%) inland waters (0.01%). As other national parks in Lithuania, KNNP is a multifunctional complex protected area. There are five functional zones as conservation zone including 16 conservation areas, where two strict nature reserves comprises 18.9%, four nature conservation reserves (57.8%) as well as six areas of cultural values and four ethnocultural reserves, 158 monuments including ten nature monuments. Next are buffer/protection zone (0.8%), recreation (19.8%), urban (0.4%) and economy (2.3%) zones. The pine stands comprise 80% of the all forests. The prevalent species are Scotch pine *Pinus sylvestris* (53%), mountain pine (*Pinus montana*) (27%). There is some more birch stands (*Betula*) (15%) and small share of the black alder stands (*Alnus glutinosa*) (3%), spruce stands (*Picea abies*) (1%) and other tree species (1%) including Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*), oak (*Quercus rubur*), locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), aspen and poplar (*Populus*). The number of mushroom and lichen species is appr. 350. The number of plant species reaches 960 including 31 species listed in the Red Data List of Lithuania. There are nearly 37 mammal species including 10 rare species and 7 species on the Red Data Book

of Lithuania. The moose (*Alces alces*), roe-deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) are more abundant, and racoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), pine marten (*Martes martes*), badger (*Meles meles*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), beaver (*Castor fiber*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*) occur rarer in the Park. Meanwhile there are more than 200 bird species including 54 on the Red Data List of Lithuania, and ten of them breed in the Park.

Foresters in the KNNP are faced with new tasks: to preserve natural components in the spit and to increase the recreational value of forests at the same time. It could be done through forest reconstruction and establishment of recreational facilities. This process started in 1973: many view points, rest places with sheds, wooden walking paths, stairs, benches, wattle fences appeared since then. It is often combined with installation of artificial fore dunes. Because of the specific environmental conditions storms cause the most damage to the forest. The greatest storms came in 1497, 1630, 1680, 1706, 1714, 1790-1792. Since World War II, the spit has been devastated by seven major storms, which uprooted pine stands totalling an estimated 80 thousand cubic metres. In 1967 alone, a storm uprooted pine stands of 30 thousand cubic metres near Nida. Another one in 1999 damaged 20 thousand m<sup>2</sup> of timber. The second big issue for a forest is forest fires that are especially dangerous for the mountain pine stands, which very often appear as a source for larger forest fires. The most tragic fires were in 1957 when 150 ha of forest had burned, in 1967 - 30 ha burned, 1971 - 15 ha burned and 1995 - 60 ha burned. The number of fires in 1966 reached 84. Although forest fires occur very often, in most cases foresters are able to control the fire at an early stage. After the World War II, forest composition in the spit has changed in favour of the Scotch pine that increased from 17% to 53% while the area covered by mountain pine decreased from 44% to 27% and birch stands decreased from 17% to 15%. The one of the main reasons was reforestation of the burned areas by Scotch pine in place of the mountain pine. Seeking to improve appearance and composition of forest stands, tending, sanitary and landscape felling methods are used except the conservation zone. Since 1956, foresters have planted about 2000 ha of forest in the spit. They also strengthened and secured about 1100 ha of sand dunes.

During the scientific excursion, Prof Andrius Kuliešis elucidated the theoretic and methodical background of the National Forest Inventory (NFI), sampling design, its evaluation and data processing algorithms. The aim of NFI is to conduct a thorough monitoring of Lithuanian forests on the whole territory of

Lithuania including Kuršių Nerija National Park as well as other protected forest areas, for efficient assessment of the main forest parameters. The sampling design of NFI was implemented in 1998-2002 and 5 600 permanent sample plots with the total area of 260 425 ha were allocated on forestland. National forest inventory is based on the method of continuous, combined, multi-stage with partial replacement sampling. Measurements carried out in the plots were aimed to ascertain soil and site types, tree damages, defoliation, understory and underbrush abundance and quality, damages by game as well as to estimate many other

indices. The speaker explained the main tasks of NFI in all Lithuanian forests according to ownership category and pointed up the main results of the inventory and their analysis.

The participants appreciated the high importance of the orderly meetings, value of the discussions on the input of all working groups seeking to the main goals of the COST Action E27 PROFOR. The further meeting will be held on September 2004 in Ireland.

**Olgrida Belova**

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## Debate on Forest Policy in Countries around the Baltic Sea

Twelve partner universities from eight countries (Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden) run a joint MSc programme under title EUROFORESTER, 'European Master of Forestry with focus on the Baltic Sea Region'. Based in Southern Sweden, the programme involves students from a dozen of countries within and outside Europe.

On March 2, 2004, the programme has featured a special event – a debate on forest policy issues in selected countries around the Baltic Sea. Moderated by Prof. Leif Mattsson and Dr. Vilis Brukas, the debate included professors from four countries: Paavo Kaimre (Estonia), Henn Tuherm (Latvia), Max Krott (Germany) and Ola Sallnäs (Sweden). The international student class constituted an active audience challenging the debaters with intricate questions. The following sections recapitulate the main themes of the debate.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of national forest policies**

Paavo Kaimre and Henn Tuherms stressed that the Baltic countries were very successful in transforming their economies and creating new legislation, including forestry. However, implementation of forest policies was not always equally good. In both, Estonia and Latvia, forest privatisation has been an awkward process causing numerous problems. For example regeneration in private forests is insufficient, control of and support to private forest owners is weak. Transformation of State forestry administration to separate insti-

tutions with normative functions (state forest services) and management functions (state management companies) was generally successful; however, insufficient resources to normative functions create a skewed power balance.

According to Max Krott, forestry traditionally is a strong independent sector with robust institutions that historically made important financial contributions to State economy. Private forest ownership is well framed, and German forests are in a good shape. However, forestry suffers from shrinking economic power and consequently shrinking interest of the State into forestry. The sector does not have good image even though forestry pursues goals that almost fulfil requirements by ENGOS.

Ola Sallnäs highlighted that, in Sweden, the process of policy formulation is extremely important. Actors come to a common agreement via discourse that results in the actual contents of policy, what is written in law is less important. Provisions of law are weakened due to the implementation filter depending on how the law is interpreted by private owners and their consultancies. The Swedish forestry is based on a mutual respect between different actors avoiding a strong regulation by the State. Forest taxes and subsidies are negligible; instead the focus is on soft implementation with help of information and training. On the down side, the forestry as a sector is not regarded to be important and does not have powerful advocates. The traditional thinking is too schematic and uniform being directed to growing trees in the same way as running a factory.